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## Stem Cell Agency Funded Researcher Wins International Award

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San Francisco, CA – Stanford stem cell scientist Marius Wernig, MD, PhD, was given the Outstanding Young Investigator award at the International Society for Stem Cell Research conference in Boston, MA.

Dr. Wernig was honored for demonstrating that it is possible to directly change specialized adult cells into other kinds of adult cells, such as a neuron, without having to go through an intermediary stage called induced pluripotency. In the words of the ISSCR this work "has transformed the field of cellular reprogramming."

"I cannot say how happy I am to receive this prestigious honor from our Society, says Dr. Wernig. "It is one of the most wonderful moments in the life of a scientist to be recognized by your colleagues for the contributions you made to the field."

Dr. Wernig is part of a CIRM disease team working on a therapy for a deadly childhood skin disease called epidermolysis bullosa. He also has a Tools and Technologies award from the stem cell agency to study neurological disorders by converting skin cells directly into nerve cells.

"Marius is one of those creative individuals who is on a trajectory that will cement his reputation as one of the very best scientists in the world", says Alan Trounson, PhD, President of the stem cell agency. "He has already advanced stem cell research – he is making remarkable progress on neural cell biology and translational medicine for very serious diseases. He deserves our recognition and our support in the work he is doing to advance stem cell science."

This award also draws attention to the importance of alternate sources of funding for researchers, particularly those at an early stage in their career. Before getting funding from CIRM Dr. Wernig received significant support for his research from the New York Stem Cell Foundation.

This is the third time a researcher funded by California's stem cell agency has won the Outstanding Young Investigator award. Previous winners include Robert Blueloch, MD, PhD from UCSF in 2011 and Joanna Wysocka, PhD, also from Stanford, in 2010.

The award recognizes the exceptional achievements of an investigator in the early part of his or her independent career in stem cell research.

Before joining Stanford and launching his research career Dr. Wernig was a composer of classical music and opera and has had some of his work premiered in Bonn, Cologne and Vienna.

**About CIRM:** CIRM was established in November 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research.

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